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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000157

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TAGS: UN PREL PGOV NL KV

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/KOSOVO: DUTCH WAITING ON CONSTITUTION

REF: A. SECSTATE 16319

¶B. THE HAGUE 141
¶C. THE HAGUE 126

Classified By: Ambassador Roland Arnall for reasons 1.5(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On February 20, Ambassador delivered reftel A points to FM Verhagen, who said he expected the Dutch to recognize Kosovo's independence on March 7, contingent on Kosovo approving its constitution. Verhagen expressed concern that the International Steering Group (ISG) might not support equal participation for all member countries. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The Dutch decision to recognize Kosovo will be made at a Council of Ministers (the full cabinet). Verhagen plans to tell the cabinet on February 29 to be ready to make the decision on March 7. Verhagen noted that he hopes this schedule coincides with Kosovo's plan for approving a constitution. The FM will be making the preparations needed to move forward quickly on recognition. He is convinced that the constitution will be acceptable, but Kosovar approval of the constitution will be "decisive" for the Dutch. The Dutch will contribute civilian police to the EU rule of law mission in Kosovo as well as providing retired judges.

¶3. (C) Verhagen asked about the purpose of the International Steering Group (ISG), and asked if there would be different tiers of countries working within the ISG (reftel C). Ambassador assured the minister there would not be two tiers and promised to convey Dutch concerns to Washington. Ambassador noted also the participation of Dutch diplomat Pieter Feith as EU special representative. Verhagen indicated that he would continue to consider the U.S. proposal for the ISG.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Ambassador requests Washington give appropriate consideration to Dutch concerns about ISG operations (see para 3). END COMMENT.

Arnall